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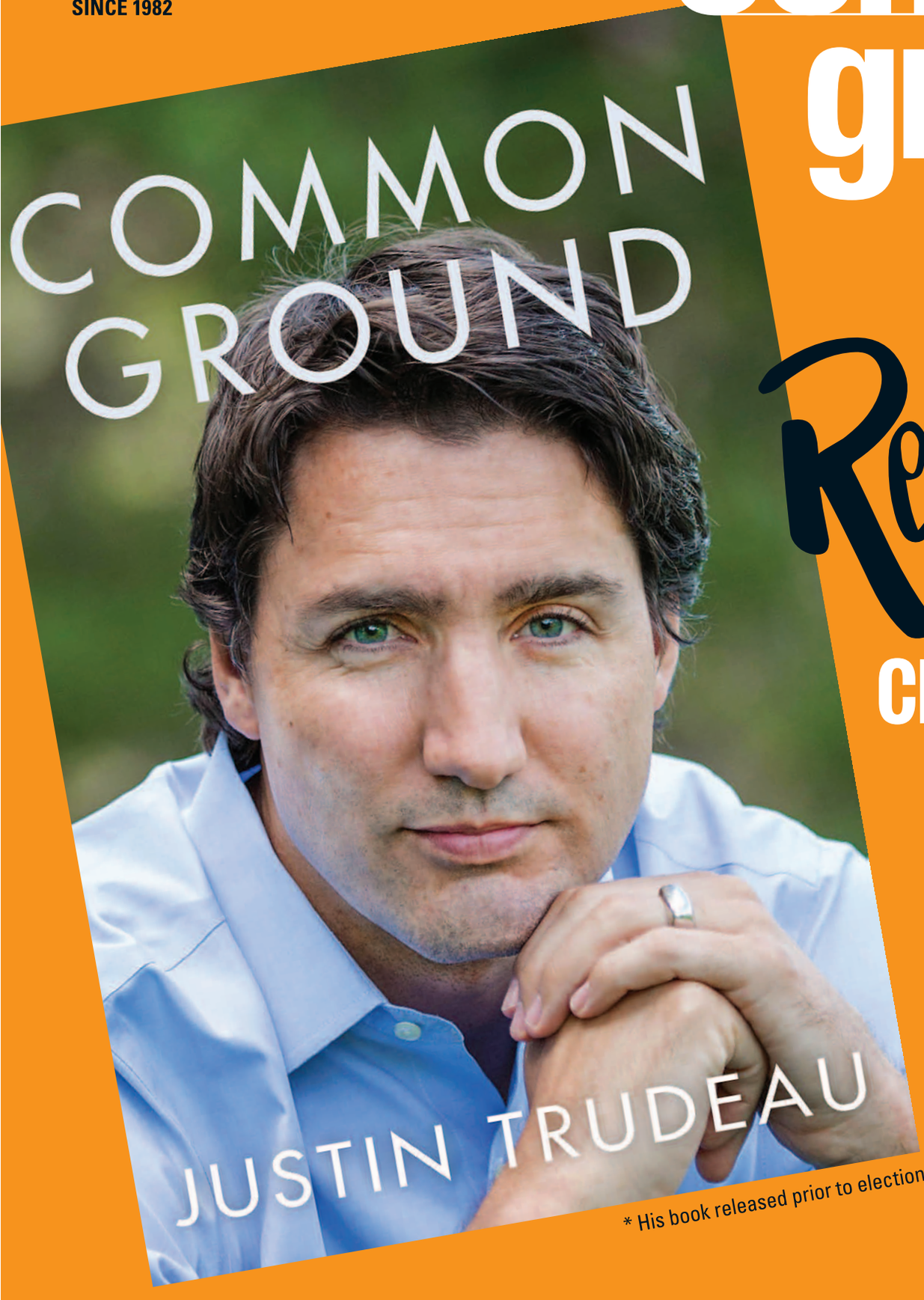

* His book released prior to election

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Storytelling has always been foundational for Level Ground. Their stories start right on the package. On each package, you will find a farmer face and name. Each farmer is paid for the use of their photo. For Level Ground, it's one more way they can provide transparency.

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features

5 **At mid-term:**
Justin Trudeau's report card
Bruce Mason

6 **Ann Mortifee**
seven decades of story and song
Joseph Roberts

8 **Saying no to chemo: the backlash**
Alan Cassels

10 **The influence of gender on disease**
Dr. Karen Jensen, ND

design: Kris Kozak

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Thank you so much for reading *Common Ground* and supporting our purpose. We look forward to hearing from you.

Joseph Roberts,
Common Ground
Publisher & founder (est.1982)

in every issue

CULTURE

14 Interest groups and NAFTA
INDEPENDENT MEDIA
Marianela Ramos Capelo

ENVIRONMENT

14 Fossil fuels and the political agenda
SCIENCE MATTERS
David Suzuki

HEALTH

11 Healthy snacking
NUTRISPEAK
Vesanto Melina

PSYCHOLOGY

13 Transcending pain and grief
UNIVERSE WITHIN
Gwen Randall-Young

12 STAR WISE

15 RESOURCE DIRECTORY

18 EVENTS

19 CLASSIFIED

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At mid-term a Justin Trudeau report card

by Bruce Mason

It's two years since he swept to power, high-fiving with one hand, promises for "Real Change" in the other. So right now, on the post-honeymoon anniversary of his election to majority government, halfway through his mandate, it's time to take a full, accurate measure of our 23rd Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau.

The TrudeauMeter offers a starting point and an ongoing gauge (https://trudeaumetre.polimeter.org).

This non-partisan, collaborative citizen initiative is specifically designed to track performance on his platform. It lists 226 promises, spelled out in Liberal literature, speech-ified and selfie-fied during the federal campaign.

Check off 59 promises made good, but also note well: work hasn't yet begun on precisely the same number: 59. There are 72 works in progress.

A useful word, going forward, is "porkies." According to dictionaries, it's cockney slang for shaded white "lies" as in, "Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been telling 'porkies' again." According to the TrudeauMeter, he has flat-out broken, and downright abandoned, a whopping 36 promises to millions of Canadians, who took him at his word and got him in (and Stephen Harper out) by, in many cases, voting strategically.

The biggest fish he hooked, reeled in, used as bait or chucked overboard were electoral reformers, the environmentally inclined, the awakened millennials and First Nations.

Justin Trudeau, in the Canadian cliché, "campaigns on the left, governs on the right." The run-up to power takes place in a less-bloodied kettle of fish. Also swimming, circling Parliament, are schools of lobbyists, assorted sharks, bottom feeders and bureaucrats, entrenched in the old power game of government.

Full marks for electoral showmanship, possibly gleaned from his part-time job teaching drama. Most unfortunately, Justin Trudeau, like far too many victorious politicians, in a post-campaign role, is now dancing with those 'who brung him,' the greedy elites who hold the real strings – the purse strings – and select and play the tunes.

The rest of us, the vast majority, are mere sidelined wallflowers, Still, a number of grateful Canadians would likely give the Libs a passing grade, another whirl, just for erasing "Harper" from the national dance-card. Perhaps enough, two years hence, for a nod to stay on as a minority prom-king. Some will continue to hold their noses while pointing south to the stench of a madman and his company of conspirators, fleecing and disassembling all remaining reason, resources and democracy below the border. To be fair, in context, the worsening dystopia of Donald J. Trump was beyond even our former prime minister, who trumpeted, "Nice hair, but Justin's not ready." Few, if any, were fully prepared.

Canada still looks good in comparison, while charting a best-course scenario through the unforeseen, current tsunamis of dangerously troubled waters, rippling and ripping northward. Endangered are trade, the economy, border security, immigration and foreign policy, etc., as well as life itself, through climate implosion or nuclear explosion.

According to the TrudeauMeter, he has flat-out broken, and downright abandoned, a whopping 36 promises to millions of Canadians, who took him at his word and got him in (and Stephen Harper out) by, in many cases, voting strategically.

Notable among Justin's 59 check marks for jobs done: finally bringing 40,000 Syrian refugees to this privileged country, releasing unprecedented, public ministerial mandate letters, unmuzzling government scientists, restoring the mandatory long-form census, persuading provinces to impose low-hanging carbon tax, establishing protocols for decriminalizing medically assisted death, the Canada Child Benefit and an equal number of women and men in Cabinet. When asked "Why?" regarding the latter, Trudeau answered, "Because it's 2015!" That went viral and global, along with the announcement in Paris during the woefully inadequate international climate accord, that "Canada is Back."

Voters must also not forget his assurances on election night: "We are committed to ensuring this will be the last federal election using first-past-the-post" and "Meaningful 'nation to nation' engagement with Indigenous peoples to secure free, prior and informed consent."

Surely "Real Change" is really just empty promise and stage-craft, unless it plays out in real-life. And we're now nearing 2018.

There are more than enough disappointing failures to reverse many Harper initiatives and broken promises for us to take issue with: pay equity legislation; marijuana legislation; a plodding, infuriating national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women; the $15 billion Canada received to provide armoured vehicles to Saudi Arabia, while there are still no funds for the 100+ indigenous communities that lack potable water; forecasted $10 billion deficits, now $23b, projected to soon tally $28.5-billion; the outed, tax-evading Finance Minister and his suspect two budgets; increasing lack of free access to information (Canada now ranked 46th, between Peru and Bulgaria); big buck infrastructure work, being doled out from the Commons to private predators – *ad infinitum*.

In arguing for a mid-course correction, Elizabeth May has posted detailed, teacher-like, subject-to-subject second year Liberal letter grades on the Green Party website. From a purely west-coast perspective, let's give the federal Liberals a generous, encouraging C-minus; their leader, a hard and fast D-plus, with lots of room to roll up his sleeves for needed improvement.

In two years, Canada's cautious optimism has churned and morphed into brick-like cynicism. Justin Trudeau has squandered his, and our, potential. He's out-of-touch and tone-deaf to the growing chorus of Canadians struggling for a living wage to pay rent, let alone save up for a down payment on a house, post-secondary training or decent childcare.

"Canadians do not expect us to be perfect; they expect us to be honest, open and sincere in our efforts to serve the public interest," Trudeau opined.

To paraphrase time-honoured report cards, "Justin gets along well with others, but must apply himself to important subjects such as environment, electoral reform and Indigenous rights."

Trudeau, the second, has two years until finals, to cut to the chase, pull up his designer socks and cut down on selfies and play-acting. And above all, cut out the porkies.

Bruce Mason is a Vancouver and Gabriola Island-based banjo player, gardener, writer and author of **Our Clinic.**

Ann Mortifee

Seven decades of story and song

An interview with Joseph Roberts

Joseph Roberts: I'm excited about your next offerings on November 30 and December 1 at Christ Church Cathedral: *The Magic of Seven*. Tell us about it.

Ann Mortifee: It turns out it's my 70th birthday; it's a shocker to realize you've almost reached 70. As you know, I was married to Paul Horn and he used to say to me before he passed, "You'll see. Your seventies are going to be the most powerful decade of your life." And I thought, "Wow, that's great. I'll go for that."

So I've taken this year to take on projects that were really meaningful to me. So *The Magic of Seven* is for me to celebrate, rather than resist, being 70 or hide it, but to really celebrate what that means. I've gone back over the last adventure of my life and there's certain songs that really captured important phases. I've got some new songs in the concert but mainly I just wanted to track my life journey in some way, starting in Africa.

I was brought up on a sugar cane farm in Zululand and spent the early years of my life on the good soil of Africa. It's had a tremendous, tremendous resonance in my life. I've written two musicals and lots of songs about it and really felt I owed a debt on behalf of my family and my race. In fact, the last time I was in *Common Ground* [March 2006] was when I did *When the Rains Come*.

JR: How did your family get from South Africa to Vancouver? Where in Canada did you first land?

AM: We landed in Montreal, but we came across by train. Dad had been the representative for Zululand, which was a little group of farmers in General Smuts' cabinet during the time they were voting about the Union and Nationalist parties. When the Nationalist Party, who believe in separate and apart, and absolutely take the vote away and change everything, won, dad said, "This is the end of South Africa for me. I've got four girls. I've gotta get out."

But my dad couldn't get any money out. So he had a good friend who took over the farm and he basically took a few trips to look at Canada, England and New Zealand – his three choices. He felt Canada was the best choice, that it was healthy and so forth. I'm glad he did. It was never spoken of, but I think he took money out of the country whenever he could, sort of sewn into his pockets, so we'd at least have something to live on when we arrived.

JR: What sparked your interest in music?

AM: It was amazing, really, when I look back. Strange things happened along the way. One was when I was at Point Grey. My history teacher said I wouldn't have to do this final paper if I would act in a theatre piece he wanted to do for Remembrance Day. The other thing was they had talent shows so three friends and I decided we would do the Charleston, and it won all the prizes. That was the first time I was on television, doing the Charleston if you can believe it. The next year, we went and did the hula and I loved the hula. I just loved it.

Four of us got together and started a little harmony group with popular songs of the day like *Twenty-six miles across the sea.* And we sang it at school dances. People heard about us and we sang at other school dances, but it never entered my mind I could do it as a living. Never. Then I was working at a summer camp on work crew and one of the gals was doing evening entertainment with kids and another gal whom I shared a room with. One of them got sick and Evia said to me, "Would you come and help me?" And I said, "Oh God." But I did. And I was hooked. I loved it.

When she came back to Vancouver, she gave me her old guitar. It was like a world opened up. I started writing songs and then was asked to work here, there and the other. I never thought I wanted to be a singer. I just liked singing and people started asking me to come and do it.

The girls I went to school with said they'd each give me a dollar if I would go to the hootenanny. That was $42 so I said okay. I can remember stepping on the stage and having this feeling like I really belonged there. It was just a feeling of comfort and happiness. I loved singing. And Josh White Sr., a blues singer from the south, was there [at the Bunkhouse] to start the the following Monday. And he saw me and said, "I want her to open my show." I opened a show the next week, much to my parents chagrin.

> The minute you get into the slipstream of your own sense of values and are unafraid to stand up for them, so much of the feeling of helplessness goes away. Love is the best way. Whenever there's love in the room everything lightens up.

I remember going down one afternoon to pick up my guitar and Les [Stork, owner of the Bunkhouse] said, "Oh, are you going to the audition?" And I said, "What's an audition?" And he said, "You just get up and sing and if they like you, you get a job. They're looking for a girl singer for a show." So I said okay. He said, "I'm going to drive you. You have to come with me. I want you to do this."

He drove me down and I got the job, which was for George Ryga's play, *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*. That totally changed my life.

JR: Please give us the context.

AM: It was the story of a Native American girl being torn apart because she exists somewhere between two cultures, the white culture and the Native American culture. It was so profound. Chief Dan George was in it. It was the first Canadian play that had really addressed what had happened, and what was happening, and it took the country by storm. It was a fabulous thing. I was 17.

And this chap, Willie Dunn – I think he was ill – kept not showing up for rehearsals. George Ryga would say, "Dear, here are the lyrics, just make something up." Well, I'd never written a song in my life so I said, "How do I

do that?" "Just make up a melody to it." That was how I became a composer. I never would've thought, "Oh, I think I'll write songs." It wouldn't have entered my mind.

That became the baseline for everything I wanted to do. *Rita Joe* went to the National Arts Centre in Ottawa to open it. And I was seen by the producer of a show that was coming in and he actually created another part for me to come in and play as a singer. That show, *Love and Maple Syrup*, was a huge success and it went on to New York. I was seen by agents there and was being auditioned for various shows and was asked to do the lead in a show called *Promises, Promises* that Burt Bacharach had written the music for.

I'd just come from doing *Rita Joe*, which was so meaningful to me, and I saw how music could alter culture. I remember very clearly working with the musical director. I hadn't yet signed my contract and I was singing, "What do you get when you fall in love… you get enough germs to catch pneumonia, after you do he'll never phone ya…" And I remember thinking, "What if I died singing this song?" Because I had to do eight shows a week. That was the contract.

And I thought, "I've just done something that was so filled with meaning and value for me." I went to see my agent the next day and asked if there was any way I could do just six months. He said, "No, it's a contract. They're not going to hire somebody else and have to train them. So I said, "I just can't do it." I decided I wasn't meant to be there and went back to Vancouver.

Three days later, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet called and asked me to write the music for *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* as a ballet. I remember Arnold Spohr calling me, "Could you come and do this?" And I was like, "I can't write a ballet score, I don't know anything about it" and he asked, "Can you feel the heart of Rita Joe? Do you know how she feels?" And I said, "Yeah, I do. I love her." And he said, "Why don't you bring your heart to Winnipeg and we'll see what happens."

I ended up writing the ballet and that was an international hit and off we went to Australia and New Zealand. I feel my whole life has been a gift. My career just grew and I would go through changes and it would move me to the next phase and then I started to want to write musicals.

Now, I knew nothing about musicals. I remember going to the library and saying, "Do you have any books on writing musicals?" They said, "No, but we have a script of a musical." I can't remember which one it was. I thought, "Okay, you put the title there, then you explain what's going on on the stage and you write what the character says." Fine. And off I went. That's when I did *Reflections on Crooked Walking*.

We really have to feed our souls. I've talked to many artists who somewhere along the line made a choice to do something to get ahead. They get known for that and they're stuck. It was a conscious choice but it wasn't like I said, "I want to do something meaningful." It wasn't like I thought about it. It was just who I was. It just didn't sit right with me. I guess it was because I came from Africa and even as a girl I was aware. I mean, you couldn't help it. We lived in the white house on the hill and I used to wonder why did they wear my hand-me-downs. Why didn't I have hand-me-downs? How come we had toast and marmalade on the table while the Zulu people lined up to get a can of mealy corn every Thursday and some meat. I guess it was that questioning part of myself. It's just social justice. Of course, I didn't know that's what it was. It was just feelings of discomfort that I had.

The other one that really impacted me was a feeling that I was living in a dream. I remember my earliest memory was of lying in my bed on the farm in Zululand and hearing the rooster crow and the morning sounds coming into my dream and I was thinking in what I now know was my dream, "Oh no, you're going to fall asleep and you're going to start dreaming and when you do you're going to forget who you are because this has happened before." And I'd become very agitated and I'd suddenly 'open my eyes' and I'd be in my bedroom on the farm and I'd go, "Oh no, oh no. I'm stuck being her again. These aren't my hands. Who am I when I'm not dreaming that I'm Ann." This was a recurring dream, this feeling of being someone else who was dreaming this reality.

I think that never left me either, that feeling of parallel worlds. That gave me my interest in meaning. Who are we? Where did we come from? What are we doing here? How can I know what is purposeful? If I'm here for some reason and I'm going to go back 'there', wherever 'there' was, that of course I couldn't remember, I wanted to find out why I was here. That was always playing out as well and has been my whole life.

JR: You're putting on an event called *The Mysteries*. What is that all about?

AM: I love musicals. I love that characters can sing at each other and just let all their feelings out through music. I just think it's the best thing. And I love music as story. Nobody knew what happened in the Eleusinian Mysteries. It was on threat of death that any participant talk about what was going on there. In fact, some people think that's why Socrates had to drink hemlock, because he divulged what was going on in the temple. I started reading everything I could about it and became totally fascinated. It led me to the myth of Demeter and Persephone, the great mother and her daughter who was abducted into the underworld by Hades, the Lord of the Underworld. And it was known by her father Zeus. He and Hades were brothers and they bargained over her. And I thought, "Well, that's still going on, isn't it?"

Demeter the mother, in losing her daughter, is thrown into this deep deep grief and loses all her power. It's like women whose children are abducted and can never get over it. She dropped into her grief and finally ends up going into her temple reaching a place of such rage that she says to Zeus and Hades, "Until you bring my daughter back to me, you're not getting one drop of my life force." She pulls her power in and the whole world starts to fall apart.

No grass grows so there's nothing to feed the sheep and the goats. Everything starts dying. One by one the gods are [saying], "You've got to do something. You've got to do something." Finally, they let Persephone go, but Hades tricks her into eating four pomegranate seeds so she has to return to the underworld for four months of the year. It's one of the rules of the underworld. I looked around me and said, "Wow, this is a prophetic story." We're having it right now. We're in the middle of it. We're stuck at the point in the myth when Demeter is saying, "I've had enough." And we're starting to see these terrible storms and food shortages and floods and fires.

We really have to feed our souls. I've talked to many artists who somewhere along the line made a choice to do something to get ahead. They get known for that and they're stuck.

The world is going into a trauma. And that was foreshadowed, prophesied, created through thought – who knows? – but every year for 2000 years this myth was told. And I thought, "Wow, that's really important."

A myth is a story that's meant to transform as we transform, but once you start writing them down they stop having the capacity to change. So I said, "I've got to change this myth. We might be able to bring the feminine heart back into the political arena, back into the world. And maybe we can avert this environmental catastrophe."And women need to be heard. We need equality because we each bring, as you know, something so unique and special.

JR: We need to turn off the mass deception and really hear what our inner being is telling us to do, our soul. The work that you're doing, music gives us permission to do that. It reminds us how important it is and how good it feels to be in touch with that.

AM: The minute you get into the slipstream of your own sense of values and are unafraid to stand up for them, so much of the feeling of helplessness goes away. Love is the best way. Whenever there's love in the room everything lightens up. I don't know how to say it loud and clear enough, because I don't get why we choose other things.

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Saying no to chemo

The medical and media backlash

"I don't know how to lay an egg, but I know when it's rotten." That's the translation of the title of the just-published book by Quebecois journalist Josee Blanchette whose clarion voice is creating waves in the cancer world. (*Je ne sais pas pondre l'oeuf, mais je sais quand il est pourri*.)

Facing a cancer diagnosis herself, Ms. Blanchette decided to look closer at the treatment offerings and she was astounded at what she saw. By drilling into clinical trials, she found that many of the modern cancer drugs on offer do almost nothing to alter the length and quality of a person's life. She also found that most oncology experts seem unable to divert from the guidelines they are told to follow and that the indifference to patients' deep wishes to know the truth about their disease means that a lot of heroic, but degrading, care is dealt to people at the end of their lives. And, of course, the massively powerful pharmaceutical industry is there giving a decidedly dark tone to the enterprise of modern cancer care.

As a media personality herself, Ms. Blanchette is articulate and forceful. She appeared on a number of high profile Canadian media outlets talking about her findings, including CBC radio's *Sunday Edition*. In a documentary called *Saying No to Chemo*, she discussed, among other things, her decision not to undergo chemotherapy. She cited an Australian study published in 2004, which looked at five-year survival rates for those who underwent chemo for 22 different types of cancer. With success rates averaging between 2.1 to 2.3 percent (treating adults) in addition to the well-known fact that the effects of chemotherapy range from the merely uncomfortable to the fatal, she found comfort in refusing further chemo. But what a sin that was.

Talking to the media was like throwing a hand grenade into the cancer world. Oncologists went ballistic, jumping all over her, saying she was going to scare people off their treatment. Vilified in the press and accused of being a hack for holistic treatment that promotes organic vegetables and turmeric, Ms.Blanchette discovered something very vital: that when journalists look too closely at medical care and point out all its failings, the truth of what they find can be measured in the size of the backlash. And this backlash was fierce.

What Josee Blanchette found is supported by other research. Last month, in a series of articles, the *BMJ* (*British Medical Journal*) looked closely at those cancer drugs approved in the US and Europe between 2008 and 2013. It found that most were approved on the basis of surrogate outcomes (ie: things like tumour shrinkage or a blood marker that often doesn't correlate to survival or quality of life). One major UK newspaper summed it up with this headline: "The costly cancer drugs that don't help patients." One oncologist responding to the *BMJ* articles said the system of cancer care in the UK "encourages doling out of chemotherapy without thought."

Despite these studies questioning the basis of much of what passes for cancer care in the modern world, is there a rich and energetic level of debate among those who are charged with dealing with cancer? Sadly, there seems to be little debate, or if there is, very little reaches the public airwaves. I wonder if debates within the cancer world could be shared? (Maybe any oncologists out there could contact me and tell me what they are, hint, hint.)

As the #2 killer (beside heart disease), Canadians should all be concerned about the quality of cancer care in this country and the grossly inflated costs for the newer, high-tech cancer drugs, which many would admit are

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toxic, minimally helpful and often make peoples' final months sheer misery.

The media cannot escape blame here. Many media outlets don't have the courage to do what CBC did in airing the documentary; they are too scared to upset the cancer orthodoxy.

Many media outlets don't have the courage to do what CBC did... they are too scared to upset the cancer orthodoxy.

Much of the reporting covering cancer therapies is lame and propagandistic, describing "miracles" and "cures" and hyping treatments far beyond what is reasonable.

You've seen the stories, often featuring a sympathetic patient who has a desire to 'do anything' in waging their personal war on cancer. By the way, the military analogy about fighting "wars" on cancer is repugnant and doesn't advance our understanding of the complexity of cancer. But it's great grist for fundraising in cancer charities or building markets for new drugs. Often, the patients featured in these stories are lucky enough to show some response to a drug, but they are almost never the patient who faces the drug's adverse effects – the one who ends up in the ICU with kidney failure or whose life ends earlier because of a drug's fatal toxicity.

Most people given a cancer diagnosis find that their world suddenly becomes numb. Everything else in your life goes straight into the backseat. You're not in the driver's seat any more and, from now on, cancer care is basically 'what you do.' Your life becomes a series of appointments, scans, biopsies and tests with drugs, more drugs and even more drugs to deal with the side effects of the side effects of the drugs you're told are essential. Then there is the waiting, the uncertainty and the many unanswered questions, which get repeated and bounced around inside a team of professionals until you feel you're losing your mind because no one seems to be talking to anyone else. It's like hell, but probably worse.

I've had two very close people in my life die from cancer and I can tell you there is no lower time in your life than when you are a witness to someone facing terminal cancer. In the cases of my family members, there was a declared, and strongly supported, desire for "no heroics." There were no last-ditch efforts at doing this or that, no heavy-duty toxic drugs to deal with and minimal travelling back and forth to clinics and hospitals for doctor visits and X-rays and all those things that define a cancer patient at the end of their days. Their care to the end was excellent, compassionate and attentive, but it was minimally invasive.

What I saw in the death of my loved ones by cancer was a dignity that I think is often stripped from people. This dignity is born of acceptance and tolerance, with the knowledge that though you're going to die, your job comes down to one thing: enjoying the days you have left with the people you love. Many patients who face the painful side effects of cancer therapies will do so because they feel "that's the price to pay." They may be told the therapies on offer are their "last chance." Many will struggle with the toxicity of those therapies, but feel they have to tolerate it, at great cost to their dignity and the quality of their few remaining days.

In healthcare, people often discuss "patient preferences" and the importance of the patient's desires when it comes to determining their course of care. Sometimes, "what the patient wants" is at the centre of the orbit and good physicians will always circle back to it, saying, "This is what you said you wanted; do you still want it?" Other times, it will be paid brief lip service, as in, "Yeah, yeah, we know what you want, but you gotta keep taking that drug because your hemoglobin is blah, blah, blah..." Numb.

What to do?

A recent essay in the *BMJ* on this subject of cancer care may have nailed the one key thing that needs to happen. An *article by *BMJ* editor Tessa Richards, who was treated for cancer, stresses how important it is for the public to know about the problems, and even scandals, in cancer care. Pretending things are just ducky is no way forward. She suggests that, if we really want to serve patients, we need them involved in research and medical conferences. We need their voices and we need them telling their stories.

Josee Blanchette may be vilified by the cancer industry for speaking the truth, but it is a truth that needs to be heard more often and by more people, hopefully before any of us have to face the cold, hard face of a cancer diagnosis.

* *The responses to the "cancer drugs scandal" must fully involve patients* www.bmj.com/content/359/bmj.j4956

Alan Cassels is a pharmaceutical policy researcher in Victoria who has lost his father and a sister to cancer.

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The influence of gender on disease

by Dr. Karen Jensen, ND

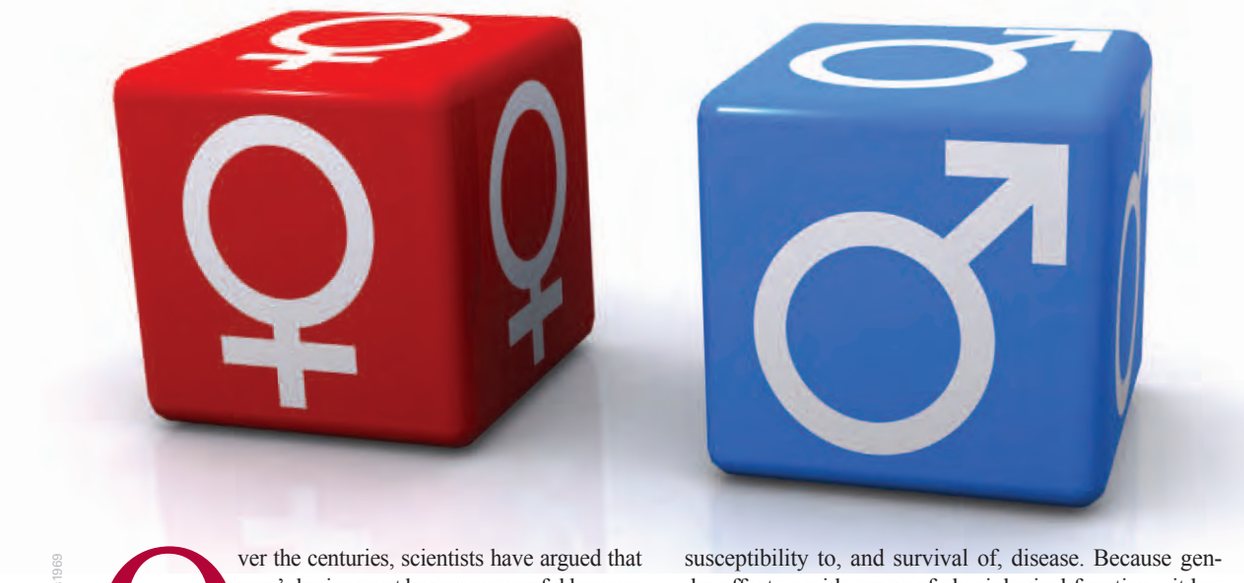

Image © Adonis1969

Over the centuries, scientists have argued that men's brains must be more powerful because they are larger than women's brains. But does size matter? Newer studies have found that the differences between men and women are much more complicated than the size of the brain. Sex is not related to a particular type of brain and we are not born with brains stamped male or female, containing little pink or blue – or grey – cells. Although expert opinion varies in terms of what makes male and female brains different – not better or worse, just different – the overall consensus is that the brain contains a mix of both male and female characteristics as unique as our individual fingerprints.

The differences between men and women are determined by very complex interactions at the cellular level, including differences in brain structure, gene expression on X and Y chromosomes, a higher percentage of body fat in women, hormones, gut physiology, social experiences, and more. According to the Institute of Medicine, every cell in the body has a sex, which means that women and men are different even down to the cellular level. This also means that diseases, treatments and chemicals will affect the sexes differently.

These differences not only influence personality traits, but also the prevalence and response to treatment of particular diseases that are likely to ail men and women. For instance, sex and gender differences in cardiovascular diseases are well-investigated and there is strong evidence that men and women face different risk factors and have different treatment outcomes.

According to the American Heart Association's journal *Circulation*, women's heart attacks may have different underlying causes, symptoms and outcomes than men's. Despite some improvements in the rate of cardiovascular deaths over the last decade, women still fare worse than men after a heart attack and heart disease in women remains underdiagnosed and undertreated.

Of course, cardiovascular diseases are by no means the only area in which men and women differ in their susceptibility to, and survival of, disease. Because gender affects a wide range of physiological functions, it has an impact on a wide range of diseases and conditions. In addition to "women only" health conditions, three times as many women suffer from autoimmune diseases as men and women are more susceptible to Alzheimer's Disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, osteoporosis, diabetes, anxiety and depression, urinary tract disorders, irritable bowel syndrome and eating disorders. However, despite the wealth of data on differences, medical practice does not sufficiently take gender into account in diagnosis, treatment or disease management.

> Every cell in the body has a sex, which means that women and men are different even down to the cellular level.

Also contributing to the disease gender gap is the medical research gender gap. Excluding women from clinical trials is negatively affecting women's health. Today, even with mounting evidence of the gender differences in disease, women are still being ignored when it comes to health research. In a 2014 report, researchers at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston stated:

"The science that informs medicine – including the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease – routinely fails to consider the crucial impact of sex and gender. This happens in the earliest stages of research when females are excluded from animal and human studies or the sex of the animals isn't stated in the published results. Once clinical trials begin, researchers frequently do not enroll adequate numbers of women or, when they do, fail to analyze or report data separately by sex. This hampers our ability to identify important differences that could benefit the health of all."

Clinical trials designed to study the safety and effectiveness of drugs and other medical treatments are primarily done with men and historically women have been treated as "small men." Even in diseases typical to women, generally the research is done with men. Can we apply what we learn from male rats or humans to a women's physiology? No, we cannot. So why, even today, are men the primary test subjects in clinical trials?

The answer is both practical and political, without malicious intent. The practical reason is that men are easier to study because they do not have menstrual cycles and they do not get pregnant. As a result, research data are easier to analyze. The political reason for excluding women from clinical trials is also historical. In the 1950s, the drug thalidomide caused pregnant women to give birth to babies with missing limbs, and in the 1970s, DES, an estrogen-like drug prescribed to prevent miscarriages, increased the risk that female babies would develop rare vaginal cancers later in life. As a result, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the United States banned all women who could become pregnant from participating in early-stage clinical trials. However, the ban ended up also including all women who were not sexually active, who used contraception or who were homosexual, as well as other minority groups. This law was upheld until 1993, even though in 1987 the National Institutes of Health (NIH) encouraged scientists seeking funding to include women and minorities in their clinical research.

Researchers surveyed papers published between 2011 and 2012 in five major surgical journals and found that in studies involving animals, 80 percent included only male subjects. In cell research, male cells were used 71 percent of the time, and in pre-clinical studies, the disparity was even more pronounced and skewed overwhelmingly male.

Millions of women and men are prescribed the same drugs every day, yet women are more likely than men to experience adverse drug reactions. In fact, 80 percent of prescription drugs pulled from the US market from 1997 to 2001 caused more side effects in women. Metabolic differences determine how drugs are released and excreted, leading to additional risk factors for women. Women are not just men with "boobs and tubes." Lower body surface in women, as well as differences in kidney function, drug resorption and metabolism cause significant differences in how the body uses and excretes drugs. In addition, the gut transit time of medications, food or anything else women ingest takes two times longer than men and, as a result, these substances stay in the body for longer periods of time.

Major sex and gender differences have been reported for the efficacy and adverse effects of heart drugs, analgesics, psychiatric drugs, anticancer and cardiovascular drugs, as well as antidepressants, anti-inflammatory and antiviral drugs. These differences are related to the appropriate dosage for each gender. It would seem obvious, therefore, that many drugs require dif- *continued p.17 ...*

Healthy snacking

Do you ever eat mindlessly? It would be very surprising if even one reader replied, "No, never." So if we are occasionally going to eat mindlessly, we may as well eat food that offers a *big* boost to our health. Chopping veggies on a regular basis, storing them in zip-lock bags and gathering tasty dips is a winning approach.

Serve a platter of colourful, cut up vegetables:

- to family members when they return from school or work.
- as an attractive way to serve vegetables at meals and for festive occasions.
- as a low-calorie, healthy snack for TV watching.
- as a great way to get vitamins, antioxidants, protective phytochemicals and fibre.

To extend your crudité horizons, here's some to serve on their own or with a dip.

Crudités

Asparagus tips	Green onions	Red, orange,
Broccoli florets	Green or snow pea	yellow and green
Carrot sticks	pods	pepper strips
Cauliflower florets	Jicama sticks	Turnip strips
Celery sticks	Mushrooms, sliced	Yam strips
Cherry tomatoes	or whole	Zucchini strips or
Cucumber discs	Parsnip sticks	discs

For dips, choose from the various hummus variations on display at supermarkets. "Spread Em" is a fun, cashew-based line of dips available at Famous Foods and other stores and at www.vegansupply.ca Also see the tapenades and guacamole.

Avocados are surprisingly nutritious with monounsaturated fatty acids and phytochemicals. They contain more folate and potassium per ounce than any other fruit, with 60 percent more potassium than bananas. They are great sources of vitamin C and E. When I do nutritional analyses with clients, we often discover that a low intake of vitamin E and plant foods are far better sources than pills. The average avocado provides 13 grams of fibre, equal to three medium-sized apples. Avocados are also rich in carotenoids; of commonly eaten fruits, they are highest in lutein, known to reduce risk of prostate cancer and maintain eye health.

Again, foods are superior to supplements; their plant sterols, such as beta-sitosterol, inhibit cholesterol absorption and possibly inhibit tumour growth. Avocados are among the richest sources of the powerful antioxidant glutathione and may have anti-inflammatory effects.

Limey avocado dip Makes about 3/4 of a cup

To retain its colour, make this dressing right before use. To keep it for several hours or a day, store it in an air-tight container or tighly cover it. Freshly squeezed lime juice gives a special flavour and nutritional yeast is rich in B vitamins. Adjust all seasonings to suit your tastes.

- 1 ripe avocado • 2 tbs. lime juice • 1 tsp. tamari or ¼ tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. each of chili powder, garlic powder and/or onion powder
- Pinch of pepper • 1 tsp. nutritional yeast (optional)

Place avocado flesh into a bowl and blend or mash with a fork until smooth. Stir in lime juice, tamari, chili powder, garlic powder, onion powder, pepper and (optional) nutritional yeast. Scoop avocado flesh into bowl and mash until smooth. Blend in lime juice, tamari, yeast, chili powder, garlic powder and pepper. Stir in onions and cilantro. Adjust seasoning.

Vesanto Melina is a Vancouver dietitian and author. The list of crudités is from the **Raw Food Revolution Diet** by C. Soria, B. Davis and V. Melina (Book Publishing Co). Information on avocados is from her award-winning **Becoming Vegan: Comprehensive Edition** and **Becoming Vegan: Express Edition**, both with B. Davis (Book Publishing Co). Limey Avocado Dip is from **Cooking Vegetarian** by V. Melina and J. Forest (Harper Collins). www.nutrispeak.com

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Mac McLaughlin

StarWise

November 2017

THE DOMINANT planetary aspect in effect throughout November is Saturn Trine Uranus. Triangular configurations are very harmonious and just about the best we can expect from planetary behaviour. The triangle aspect gives a dovetailing effect in the sense of cooperative energies prevailing. Let's break it down a bit. Saturn is in Sagittarius. Interestingly, Saturn represents all aspects of law and judgement. He's a stern and somewhat dour taskmaster. Somewhat like castor oil, it doesn't taste good, but it's good for us. He brings hard and harsh lessons and, sure enough, once we pass through them, we garner great wisdom and are usually better off for the experience. Sobered and cleansed, we move forward.

Sagittarius is the sign most related to the spirit of the law, along with societal, medical and educational philosophies. This combination of Saturn in Sagittarius will help us to bring our collective ship into its right headings. Along with this energy, we have Uranus moving through Aries, which is a powerful marker for all kinds of social unrest and volatility, along with revolutionary activity. I'm not going to stoop to harping, whining and preaching, but I think we know what time it is. We have to grow a backbone and bite the bullet; grievous as it is, we have to clean up the very serious problems that plague our world these days. As we move towards the end of the month, Mercury begins to slow down and go retrograde in early December. Generally, this may throw a stick into the spokes and present us with myriad concerns regarding communication and transportation, along with business negotiations. This is standard fare for Mercury retrograde, but this time around, Mercury is travelling alongside Saturn and it may bog things down considerably until mid-December.

If you're bogged down in serious traffic or sitting in an airport where the systems are down, know that Saturn and Mercury are up to their high jinks. The remedy is to have yourself together and allow plenty of time to get where you are going; even with that, you can expect a few snafus around dates, schedules and all other kinds of unexpected delays. Book early, don't leave things to the last minute and get your snow tires now. Be kind and patient and, most of all, speak the truth, live honourably and help out where you can. Forewarned is forearmed and a stitch in time saves nine.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109.

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ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19
There's bound to be some fireworks throughout the month as lord Mars moves through your opposite sign Libra. Contentious relationships, loose lips and any kind of inconsiderate behaviour will not pass unnoticed at this time. It might be time to have a good fess-up session, or a confession, and set the record straight. Love heals all.

TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21
Be kind to yourself and others, as November is generally not the best of times for Taurus. It is the right time to look in the mirror and truly see who is staring back at you. Deep reflection will do. Some interesting lucky breaks could come into play and love could grow very strong.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20
When planets are in your opposite sign, they cast their light into your sign bringing illumination and clarification. That's the story now as Mercury and Saturn move through your opposite sign Sagittarius. Read the intro for more details. Mainly, it's a time to clear out and clean up tangled situations, however you can.

CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22
Venus and Jupiter cast lovely energy your way all month. They are very beneficial planets. Make the best use of them by mending, healing, giving and loving. There are new mountains to climb starting in 2018 so it's best to settle with the past now and prepare for some new challenges.

LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22
Two sets of planetary energies are pulling you in opposite directions. Acquiring a bigger house or finer car won't really cut it. These are merely trinkets and baubles and will not bring any lasting satisfaction. On the other hand, deep meditation, devotion and striving for the light and love will work wonders.

VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22
The times are a bit tricky, especially towards the end of the month and heading into December. Expect delays and complications. When a silken scarf is caught in the rose vine, you remove it from the thorns carefully, otherwise you risk tearing it. That's the answer now. Disentangle yourself from complicated knots and double knots.

LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22
Fiery Mars is in the house and when the god of war is around, we can expect sparks to fly, right into early December. Things could get a bit sketchy and tense. Use it or be abused by it. Positive use is being bold, honourable and brave; negative use is frustration, inconsideration, impatience and anger.

SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21
It's your time to shine as the two beneficial planets, Venus and Jupiter, travel through your sign. Be pro-active and do your best to make things happen. Put lots of irons in the fire, and if one gets hot, you're on your way. Lucky breaks and good timing figure in the play. Do something now.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21
Go deep and go long in your search for freedom, peace and happiness. Shake off any form of fear and negativity. Undoubtedly, the hard knocks you have been receiving have had their effect. Brighter times are just up the road a bit. Hang in there and see what the universe provides. Study hard.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19
Pay attention to the energies on board on November 7 and 8. Intrigue, mysteries, surprises and challenges may arise through to mid-month. Stay out of the darkness; stay in the light and mostly fight the good fight. Of course, the best fight is within ourselves in overcoming anger, ego, lust and greed.

AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19
Circle November 25 as a special day in which some interesting news may come your way. Pleasantries and good times with friends and family will do. November represents effort and challenges on the work front and changes may occur. It's highly likely you will land on your feet and in very good circumstances.

PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20
Magical and mystical Pisces types may enjoy the energies that unfold in November. Travel is highlighted, as is spiritual growth. Career-wise, you may be honoured for your achievements or you could be ushered out the door. Much depends on how you have conducted yourself over the last 15 years.

Transcending pain and grief

Grief can be the garden of compassion. If you keep your heart open through everything, your pain can become your greatest ally in your life's search for love and wisdom. – Rumi

Most people experience grief and pain at some time in their lives. And some have lives that are *filled* with grief and pain. Today, I want to talk about the pain we feel when we think we have been wronged by another.

In my practice, I often see individuals who are deeply distressed by an incident that leaves them feeling rejected or not valued. Often, they just cannot let it go. A client's son was getting married and her sister was deeply offended that she hadn't been invited. She was upset with my client. The fact was that the couple were paying for the wedding themselves and the parents were not given any say as to who was invited. It was not a personal rejection. It had to do with budget and the young couple wanted to include as many of their friends as possible.

Pain and grief can break us open. Our compassion for others will be greater because we *know* what they are living through.

I had another client who had not spoken to her son in months because he waited until early afternoon to call with Mother's Day wishes instead of first thing in the morning. The fact that the year before her son and girlfriend had taken her along on their trip to Europe was not enough for her to see that she was important to them.

This kind of pain is self-inflicted and is likely triggering the individual's own undervaluing of themselves. If we do not value ourselves, we will continually need confirmation from others that we are important.

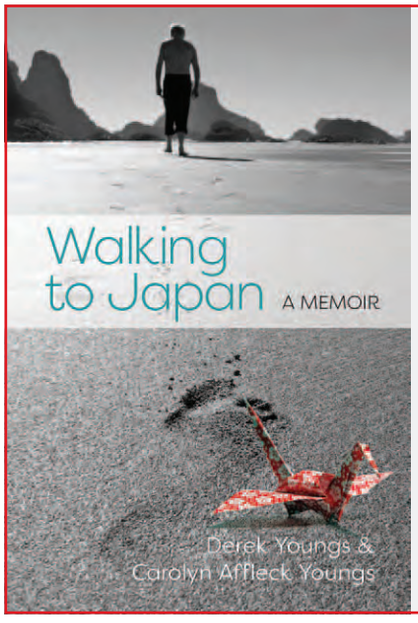
Sometimes the rejection is real: a partner ends a relationship or marriage or a friend is no longer interested in keeping the friendship going. It is easy to begin tearing down the other and blaming them for our pain. Some people hold on to this perspective for years and it comes to define them.

There is an alternative. We can choose to be loving and compassionate to ourselves as we look deeply into our pain and perhaps see it may be triggering other pain we have had in our lives. Maybe, we even see a pattern. We can focus on what we can do or say *to ourselves* to begin the process of healing. The 'danger' we feel when there is a loss can lead to a recognition that we need to build our inner strength. We do have to forge a new path for ourselves and in the beginning, we may feel we do not know how to move on. We need a period of 'incubation' where we feel the depth of the hurt or loss. If we do not do the work to heal the pain, we will continue to be vulnerable.

Pain and grief can serve to break us open. Our compassion for others who suffer will be greater because we *know* what they are living through. If we transcend the bitterness and unfairness of it all, we gain a depth and wisdom we did not have before.

It may seem counterintuitive to go right into the pain, rather than trying to avoid it or numb it. Giving birth to a baby can be a struggle and it can be painful. For most, it is hard work! Giving birth to a new level of awareness can also be a struggle, but the catalyst for that struggle is often the pain. The new growth would not have occurred without it.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. To read more articles or to order books, "Deep Powerful Change" hypnosis MP3s or MP3s for Creating Effective Relationships, visit www.gwen.ca or check out her inspirational page on Facebook.



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Don't let fossils hijack political agenda

I consider voting a privilege and a responsibility. But I wish politicians would take their responsibility to voters more seriously. We elect them to represent us. Sometimes our interests coincide with corporate priorities. After all, corporations create jobs and economic opportunities and often develop products and services citizens need. Corporations can't vote, but by putting enormous amounts of money into campaigns and lobbying, they can hijack the political agenda.

That's the case with the fossil fuel industry, the most profitable in human history. It's taken such hold on the US that the current administration refuses to accept advice and research from climate scientists, biologists, military experts, economists and others who warn that continuing to burn fossil fuels will steer us to climate catastrophe, and that failing to act will be far more costly and lacking in economic opportunity than confronting the challenge.

Canadians shouldn't be smug. Many people expected changes in 2015 when the Liberals won the federal election and the NDP won Alberta's election. The new governments said the right things and came up with reasonably good plans, but then continued to approve and promote fossil fuel development and infrastructure to the extent that one has to question whether they understand the urgency of the climate crisis.

As former Alberta Liberal Party leader and *Oil's Deep State* author Kevin Taft writes in a *Maclean's* article, "The link between fossil fuels and global warming has been known since the 1980s and so has the solution to global warming: phasing out fossil fuels. Rather than accepting the science and adapting to other sources of energy, the oil industry has developed an aggressive campaign to obscure the science and advance its own interests."

Since their 2015 election, the federal Liberals and Alberta NDP have maintained support for fossil fuel projects and infrastructure.

In early October, federal environment commissioner Julie Gelfand gave the government a failing grade on climate change, noting only five of 19 government departments she looked at had even assessed climate risks and how to deal with them.

Taft also examines how oil money has compromised universities' independence. A recent report by the University of Western Ontario's Alison Hearn and York University's Gus Van Harten backs him up, showing Enbridge funding for the University of Calgary created conflicts of interest, compromised academic freedom and gave the company influence over decision-making.

It's not the first time the University of Calgary has been caught up in oil industry scandals. In 2004, political science professor Barry Cooper set up research accounts to secretly funnel donations, mostly from oil and gas industries, to the misnamed group Friends of Science for its efforts to dispute climate science and reject the Kyoto Protocol.

Democracy works, if we participate. But it doesn't function well if we forfeit our rights to corporate interests. We must speak out at the ballot box and between elections and tell politicians our support depends on them putting our interests first.

Excerpted from **Government for the People, Not Fossil Fuel Corporations. David Suzuki** is a scientist, broadcaster, author and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation senior editor Ian Hanington. Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org.

Interest groups and NAFTA

Fishing in troubled waters

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is being renegotiated with little to no transparency at the expense of those who will feel its effects the most: everyday citizens. Interest groups and corporations are "fishing in troubled waters," scrambling to take advantage of this opacity to shape the agreement to their benefit. Here are some ways in which everyday Canadians would feel the effects of this closed-doors, renegotiated NAFTA. It doesn't look pretty.

1 - Your access to affordable medicine would be endangered

While it is copyright that usually keeps us occupied at OpenMedia, the draconian expanse of intellectual property policies affects other aspects of our lives, too. The cost of medicine is one of the clearest examples of the impacts of outdated patent and intellectual property policies. Pharmaceutical corporations are given a period of time in which they have the exclusive rights to sell the product they developed. During this time, they can make up for the cost of the expensive processes of research and development of their product. After that period expires, the patented formula is released for other laboratories to produce and release medicines, usually at a lower price. In a nutshell, this is how we get the more affordable "generic" or "non-brand" versions of drugs.

NAFTA is threatening this process. Big Pharma is seeking to expand the periods of exclusive rights to sell medications. These legal monopolies have made the headlines for their nefarious price-gouging practices in the States and there is no doubt big corporations will try to expand these practices into Canada. In other words, your access to affordable medication in Canada could disappear or be drastically reduced under NAFTA.

2 - Canada's Internet would be subject to extrajudicial blocking systems

The Internet as we know it in Canada is under threat. This sounds alarming, but it is not a far-fetched argument. Bell Canada has openly stated it wants to introduce extrajudicial website blocking systems into the policies being discussed at the NAFTA renegotiations.

What does this mean for the average Canadian? Bell has suggested the creation of a "blacklist" of websites and a third-party body to monitor the blocking of blacklisted sites without due process. Bell takes it a step further by requesting these blocking systems be accompanied by criminal provisions, which might capture people who engage in legal, fair and normal use.

Imagine being sent to court for exercising your right to free speech? If this seems excessive to you, Canadians can speak out at act.openmedia.org/bellNAFTA to stop this reckless proposal.

These are only two ways in which corporations, interest groups and even countries are taking advantage of the lack of transparency surrounding NAFTA to bend the rules in their favour.

Learn more and take action at https://act.openmedia.org/freetradefreeinternet

Follow www.openmedia.org, www.facebook.com/openmediaorg and www.twitter.com/openmediaorg to stay up to date in the fight to keep the Internet safe from predatory trade agreements.

Marianela Ramos Capelo is a graphic designer and part of the communications team at OpenMedia, a community based organization that works to keep the Internet open, affordable, and surveillance free. openmedia.org

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*...**Gender** from pg. 10*

ferent dosing to achieve optimal effects. However, a 2005 analysis of 300 new drug applications between 1995 and 2000 found that even the drugs that showed substantial differences in how they were absorbed, metabolized and excreted by men and women had no sex-specific dosage recommendations on their labels. This might be one reason why women are 1.5–2 times more likely to develop an adverse reaction to prescription drugs than men.

In 1993, the US Congress passed an act requiring that all NIH-funded Phase 3 clinical trials include women, however the male-centric tendency still exists. According to a 2006 study in the *Journal of Women's Health*, women made up less than one-quarter of all patients enrolled in 46 examined clinical trials completed in 2004. And although heart disease kills more women than all cancers combined, a 2008 study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* reported that women comprised only 10-47 percent of each subject pool in 19 heart-related clinical trials.

As a result, the question is if you are only studying males, how do you know the therapy will work or have the same effects or risk factors on women? Simple answer: You don't! Dr. Jerilynn Prior, a professor of endocrinology at the University of British Columbia, says men are not adequate replacements for women in research. "It is not scientifically correct. Period. Full stop." Women deserve to be studied to the same intensity and standards.

Many health care practitioners are not aware of the gender bias in clinical studies and the implications for women's health. As a result, it becomes a bottom-up situation, requiring education of the public, and women in particular.

In health care, as in any area of life, it is crucial to understand what it is we are trying to achieve: the best level of health with the least degree of harm. Armed with a greater level of knowledge, a person is in a better position to more readily assess the ability of different medical approaches, based as they are on distinct philosophies, to meet individual needs. It also allows for greater participation in discussions with health care practitioners when making informed choices regarding health promotion and disease prevention, treatment and management.

It is always important to address the underlying causes of any condition when possible. There are times when treating symptoms of a disease with drugs or surgery is absolutely necessary, so it is important to be informed about the gender differences in treatment outcomes.

Medicine is both a science and an art. It is a science as it presents facts and evolves principles; it is an art as it applies these principles to suit the needs of individual patients. Practising the art of medicine requires active and careful listening. Unfortunately, we live in a world where studies and statistics take priority and many doctors have lost the art of listening to their patients. Gender remains an independent and important risk factor and sex and gender differences in common diseases must be considered in order to improve health and quality of health care for both women and men.

As an individual, you have choices: You can take the proactive approach by making health care choices that promote greater health and vitality and that are specifically intended to prevent disease from occurring. Should symptoms of disease strike, you can be prepared with a basic knowledge of what treatments are available to you which ones are the safest and most effective. Ask questions and learn to listen to your own body.

Excerpted from **Women's Health Matters: The influence of Gender on Disease** by Dr. Karen Jensen, ND, www.mindpublishing.com
Karen Jensen received her degree in naturopathic medicine from the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine (CCNM) in 1988. She is a well-known author and lecturer.

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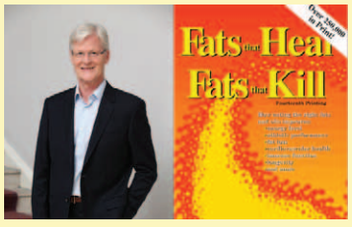

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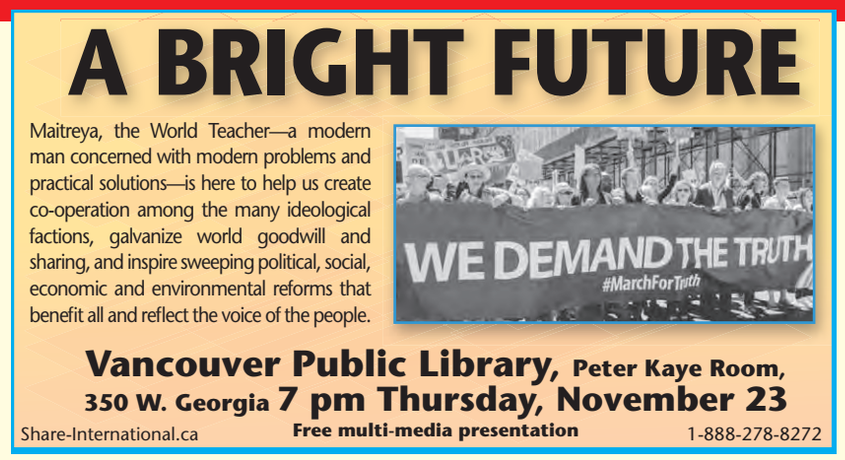
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In 35 years, we have distributed millions of free copies of Common Ground. Now, we are asking you to help the magazine you love so we can continue to educate, empower and inspire more people. We face massive issues from climate change, pipelines, toxic fish farms, LNG, environmental destruction, GMOs, homelessness, corruption, an undemocratic, colonial FTTP electoral system, lack of reconciliation, monopolies, corporate bullying, inequality, post-truth media, human rights abuse, threats of war, big pharma… and that's just a starter list. Common Ground has informed people for over three decades. And we need to do more to push back against the problems and develop the solutions. But we need your help to accomplish the tasks before us. Your financial support will enable Common Ground to make our city, province, country and world a safer, more intelligent place to live. Every dollar counts.

Please sent your donation via mail to Common Ground, 3152 West 8th Ave, Vancouver, BC, V6K 2C3. Make cheques payable to Common Ground. Or you may send an E-transfer to Common Ground via joseph@commonground.ca

Thank you for reading Common Ground and appreciating our purpose. We look forward to hearing from you.

Joseph Roberts,
Common Ground
Publisher & founder (est.1982)